

As he retires from providing leadership and guidance to the faculty, students, and staff of numerous institutions of higher education and to countless communities in California, I am pleased to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring a true leader in education and community development.●

HONORING NELL SOTO

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring California Assembly member Nell Soto on a lifetime of achievement and advocacy for the people of California. Throughout her tenure in both the California Assembly and the California State senate, Nell Soto has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life for the people of California and our Nation. Despite recent health challenges, this June she will celebrate her 82nd birthday and can look back on a proud career in public service.

A sixth-generation resident of the City of Pomona, Nell Soto has been a lifelong member of the southern California community and has been a strong advocate for its communities throughout her life. Before coming to the California Legislature, Nell Soto served 12 years on the city council in Pomona. Her late husband Philip Soto served two terms in the state legislature from 1962 to 1966. Nell was the first woman from the San Gabriel Valley to serve on the South Coast Air Quality Management Board. She served 10 years as a public affairs representative with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. In 1998 she was elected to the California Assembly and in March of 2000 won a special election to secure a seat in the California State senate, a seat that she held until 2006. She now serves once again in the California Assembly.

Throughout her tenure in the California Legislature, Nell has been an impassioned advocate for stronger communities and an improved quality of life and has worked to make improvements throughout the California educational system. She has been a strong advocate of improvements in infrastructure and transportation and worked hard to secure the development of the Alameda Corridor East, an important rail transportation project in inland southern California. She has been an equally impassioned advocate for crime prevention, public safety, and the environment, and recently served as chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Perchlorate Contamination and has worked to secure funding for improvements in drinking water safety from perchlorate contamination.

A lifelong resident of southern California, mother of 6, grandmother of 11, great-grandmother of 3, and spirited supporter of community advocacy and selfless service, Nell Soto is a wonderful public servant. As she looks back on decades of leadership and celebrates her 82nd birthday, I am pleased to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing her good work.●

TRIBUTE TO ELTON "MICK" RINGSAK

● Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to an outstanding advocate of small and rural business, Elton "Mick" Ringsak, who will be concluding his time as Small Business Administration Region VIII Administrator in July of 2008.

For nearly 8 years he has been a champion for small business in rural America. He has recognized the important role they play in strengthening the local and national economies of our country and I have appreciated the excellent work he has done for the State of North Dakota. Mick has worked hard to provide Federal assistance to small businesses so they can be productive and grow.

Not only is Mick Ringsak an advocate for small and rural businesses in America, he is also an outstanding person. He has never lost the values he gained growing up in Grafton, ND. During my years as Tax Commissioner for the State of ND, I had the opportunity to work closely with his father, a legislator in the State Senate from the Grafton area.

Mick and his wife Claire are parents of three sons, Quint, Justin and Zach. He is trustworthy, honest, and dedicated to making the economic environment friendlier to small and rural businesses. Prior to his appointment appointed as the SBA Region VIII Administrator in 2001, Mick, a Vietnam veteran, owned and managed Miller's Boots and Shoes along with his brother-in-law in Butte, MT.

I appreciate his work as SBA Region VIII Administrator, and I wish Mick well in his future endeavors. I have enjoyed working with him in developing North Dakota's small and rural businesses and he has also been a good friend. I wish him all the best in his upcoming retirement and look forward to his continuing leadership for small business for many years to come.●

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF AYR, NORTH DAKOTA

● Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am pleased to honor a community in North Dakota that is celebrating its 125th anniversary. On June 21 and 22, the residents of Ayr will come together to celebrate their community and its historic founding.

Ayr is located in Cass County. Although its population is small, Ayr holds an important place in our State's history. Originally founded in October 1883 as Dunlop, the town was officially renamed Ayr by postmaster Frank Dickinson. He chose to name the community Ayr in recognition of Ayrshire, Scotland, the ancestral home of many of Ayr's citizens at the time. Later, some residents tried to change the name of the town again, but the territorial legislature took action to put an end to the renaming effort.

Ayr is a community dedicated to service, with many citizens serving

both in the government and military. Many in the community have also played a role in defining the preservation of North Dakotan history, with community members such as Keith Johnson who was responsible for much of the restoration of historic buildings in the Cass County 'Pioneer Village' project.

Mr. President, I ask the United States Senate to join me in congratulating Ayr, ND, and its residents on their 125th anniversary and in wishing them well for the future. By honoring Ayr and all other towns of North Dakota, we keep the pioneering, frontier spirit alive for future generations. It is places such as Ayr that have helped to shape this country into what it is today, which is why this fine community is deserving of our recognition.

Ayr has a proud past and a bright future.●

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF HAGUE, NORTH DAKOTA

● Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am pleased to honor a community in North Dakota that is celebrating its 100th anniversary. On July 4 and 5, the residents of Hague will gather to celebrate their community's history and founding.

In 1882, a rural post office was established to serve the Grandin Brothers Bonanza Farm. In 1882, the Bonanza farm was 40,000 acres, which made it the largest wheat farm in the world. This Bonanza farm was managed by a man named John A. Hague, and he eventually lent his name to the town of Hague.

Today, Hague is a small but vibrant community in south, central North Dakota. Residents of the community are truly proud of the St. Mary's Catholic Church, a Gothic-style, brick building built in 1929 that is on the National Register of Historic Places. St. Mary's Church possesses an iron cross cemetery that is a German-Russian tradition, which makes it a unique cultural gem.

To celebrate its 100th anniversary, the town of Hague will be having a wide range of events. To start off the festivities, the residents will be participating in a Tractor Trek. The town will also have a rodeo, parade, concerts, a magician, cloggers, and fireworks. Kristi Goblade, a local resident of Hague, will be performing cowgirl yodeling at the opening ceremony. A performance by Mylo Hatzenbuehler, a country humorist, is also expected.

Mr. President, I ask the United States Senate to join me in congratulating Hague, ND, and its residents on their first 100 years and in wishing them well in the future. I believe that by honoring Hague and all the other historic small towns of North Dakota, we keep the frontier spirit alive for future generations. It is places like Hague that have helped to shape this country into what it is today. I believe that Hague is deserving of our recognition.